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Aid from the Enemy

THE SECRET SURRENDER by Allen Dulles. 268 pages. Harper & Row. \$5.95.

Precisely at 2 o'clock on the afternoon of May 2, 1945, the men of 22 Nazi and six Italian Fascist divisions in northern Italy laid down their arms. The surprise mass surrender, which involved nearly 1,000,000 troops and led only days later to Germany's complete capitulation, could only have been engineered. It was, in fact, one of the most stunning triumphs in the history of secret wartime diplomacy. The Allies' Operation Sunrise was bossed



SS GENERAL WOLFF (1945)
The value of paving a channel.

principally by Allen Dulles, who was later to become director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Dulles' narrative is straight out of the best spy fiction. In Switzerland in 1942 he established an OSS listening post that listened right into Nazi Germany itself; for example, he knew months in advance of the generals' plot against Hitler in July 1944.

Private Line. Later that same year, Dulles' people began to pick up fascinating intelligence in the form of peace feelers from Nazi leaders assigned to northern Italy. As the tide turned against the Nazis, these overtures grew in number, so Dulles decided to pave a channel of communications for the enemy.

By March 1945, this private conduit had admitted an astonishing emissary onto Swiss soil: Nazi General Karl Wolff, commander of the SS (Hitler's elite *Schutzstaffel*) in northern Italy. Like many of his fellow generals, Wolff had lost faith in a Führer whose paranoia refused to see that Germany was losing the war; like few of them, Wolff was prepared to do something about it. Meeting with Dulles in Zurich, he proposed to deliver every enemy soldier in northern Italy to the Allied cause.

From that point on, Operation Sunrise reads like an exercise in frustration. The Russians, informed of the negotiations—against Dulles' better judgment—churlishly insisted that it was all really a plot to keep them out of the peace arrangements; at one point, Truman called the whole operation off to smooth the Bear's ruffled fur. Nazi changes of command kept eliminating generals who were sympathetic to Sunrise and replacing them with generals who were not. From Berlin, a counterplot by Himmler, designed only to steal the play away from Wolff, threatened to retire Sunrise to the limbo of lost causes. The generals of the various Nazi commands in Italy fought among themselves over the issue of a negotiated peace, and Wehrmacht tanks once even leveled their guns on Wolff's SS headquarters in Bolzano.

Easy Start. Dulles passes no moral judgment on SS General Wolff, agreeing with the assessment of Gerö Gaevnitz, one of Dulles' aides in Bern: "Wolff began to see the light in 1943, and tried not to extricate himself but to extricate the nation out of its tragic situation." Wolff's fellow Germans were more severe: in 1964 a court sentenced him to 15 years for being "continuously engaged and deeply entangled in guilt."

The author reserves judgment for the business of war itself: "It is so easy to start wars or to get drawn into them," he writes, "and yet so difficult to stop them. One lesson we learned from Sunrise was the vital importance of establishing a secret contact and secure communications between the leaders on each side of the battle. This is not impossible."

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